

### **Customer Satisfaction High Among Electronic Filers**

WASHINGTON — For the second year in a row, a government-wide survey found that taxpayers who electronically file their federal income tax returns give high marks to the Internal Revenue Service's electronic filing program.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index survey, sponsored by the President's Management Council, shows that the overall customer satisfaction score for electronic filing increased to 75 in 2000, from 74 in 1999. This surpasses the score of 71.2 for comparable services in the private sector and for the filing of paper tax returns. It is also well above the government's average score of 68.6. Additionally, 81% of the respondents say they intend to file again electronically.

"The survey findings support the IRS's own experience with electronic filing — that taxpayers who try it really like it," said Charles O. Rossotti, IRS Commissioner. "But we are working hard to improve service for taxpayers in all areas of the IRS."

One of those areas is the filing of paper returns. The ACSI survey shows that the overall customer satisfaction score for paper filing is 48. The survey report concluded that customer satisfaction with paper filing is affected most by circumstances beyond IRS control, such as the complexity of the tax code, making it hard for the IRS to substantially improve this score.

The survey sampling for paper filing was drawn from individuals who had filed paper federal tax returns in 1999. The sampling for electronic filing was drawn from individuals who filed their 1999 returns electronically, either through a practitioner, over the telephone (TeleFile), or via a personal computer. Both sets of respondents were asked about the accessibility and clarity of information, ease and cost of filing, and courtesy and professionalism of IRS staff.

The number and percentage of taxpayers who file their income tax returns electronically have grown substantially in the past few years. About 25 million (20%) individual returns were filed electronically in 1998, nearly 30 million (23%) in 1999, and more than 35 million (33%) in 2000.

Taxpayers have found that electronic filing has many advantages:

- It's the fastest way to get refunds. Refunds are received in half the time as those for paper filers, and even faster with Direct Deposit.
- It has an accuracy rate of over 99%, which reduces the chances of getting an error notice from the IRS.
- It provides an IRS acknowledgment that the return has been accepted within 48 hours.
- It allows taxpayers in 37 states and the District of Columbia to file their federal and state tax returns simultaneously.
- It provides privacy and security.

Next year, the ACSI survey will be expanded to include the Small Business/Self-Employed and the Tax Exempt/Government Entities business divisions, newly created as part of the IRS's reorganization.

"The IRS is committed to providing top-quality service to taxpayers and others," said Rossotti. "Our new structure and programs, technological improvements, increased measurement of customer satisfaction and other modernization efforts will help bring us to that goal."

The IRS was one of 30 federal departments, offices and agencies participating in the survey of customer satisfaction. These agencies serve 90% of federal government customers.

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